‘A Simple and Warm Common Humanity’: Self-Transcendence and Restless Resilience in Jürgen Moltmann’s Theology

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Abstract

This chapter seeks to identify the particular influence theologian Jürgen Moltmann’s experiences of trauma and suffering during the Second World War had on his subsequent theology of hope, before then explicating how those experiences and that theological system relate to issues of health, well-being, and resilience. Ultimately, it is argued that themes of sociality and self-transcendence link Moltmann’s writings with his experiences and permit him to offer a vision of resilience as a restless discontentment with present circumstances that manifests as ‘the strength to be human’.

In 1945, after nearly a year as a prisoner in British POW camps, and three years before he would ultimately be released back to his German homeland, Jürgen Moltmann was handed a Bible by an army chaplain (Moltmann 2007:30). Although he immediately began reading small portions of the Bible at night, Moltmann initially did so with little enthusiasm. Yet, one passage resonated with his predicament and stirred up the heavy dregs of optimism that had settled dormant in his spirit during and after the Second World War. Psalm 39 was ‘an echo of [his] own soul’ (ibid), with its claim that ‘everyone is but a breath, even those who seem secure’ and its poignant plea: ‘Lord, listen to my cry for help; do not be deaf to my weeping. I dwell with you as a foreigner, a stranger, as all my ancestors were’ (39:5,12). [1] For the reluctant German soldier, suffering from survivor’s guilt exacerbated by national shame and estrangement from his home – a true foreigner with images of fleeting life still flashing in his mind – this scripture represented a psychological pivot. He read gratefully when the psalmist declared, ‘My hope is in you’ (39:7), and would go on to write extensively on the subject of Christian hope – most notably in his *Theology of Hope* (1967). What is more, and as will be shown below, Moltmann’s theology not only reflects his affinity for psalms of lament and the hope they ignited in the 1940s, but also his unique experiences of war-time trauma and the resilience he summoned after recognising the inherent sociality of our world.

Indeed, in so much as Psalm 39 (and others like Psalm 9) represents a confident collective proclamation – rather than wishful invocation – it presages the assertions and conclusions of a growing body of scholarly literature addressing the value of religious faith and community for psychological resilience. Indeed, from clinical studies of ‘religious coping’ – a term referring to the use of conceptual, behavioural, and social resources made available by one’s religion to confront distressing circumstances (Currier et al. 2015; Gerber et al. 2011; Peres et al. 2007) – to broader existential arguments about the enduring mental significance of religious practice (Asma 2018), religion’s capacity to abet resilience – to help individuals ‘adapt well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress’[2] – is receiving increased attention. Marek Kopacz and colleagues, for example, surveyed nearly 500 combat veterans in the United States and found that involvement in a religious organisation – regardless of doctrine, race, gender, age, or ethnicity – strongly predicted decreased risk for suicidal ideation (2016). Similarly, Monica Gerber and her colleagues analysed over 1,000 cases of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), ultimately finding that positive religious coping predicted stronger resilience following trauma ‘beyond

emotion-focused and avoidant coping, gender, and race' (2011: 303). They concluded that this correlation between religion and resilience 'should receive more attention in research [on trauma]' and 'may exist because religious constructs tend to be vital in defining meaning and significance…across social classes and racial groups' (ibid).

However, we should not only look to new clinical studies to investigate this correlation, but also to both the religious systems themselves as well as to their histories. For many influential voices in the history of Christian theology, particularly Moltmann's, the potential psychological benefits embedded in doctrinal and ecclesiastical constructs result not from vapid philosophical speculation but from concrete instances of acute suffering countered by redemptive hope. In other words, before clinicians and mental health researchers can help 'individuals develop depression-reducing thoughts and behaviours informed by their own religious beliefs, practices, and resources' (Pearce et al. 2015: 57), those religious systems must be informed by a meaningful resonance achieved between experience and revelation – between humanity's countless cries for help and the restorative responses found in the scriptures, traditions, and social lives of those religious communities. When, for Christians of any ilk, mental and emotional fortitude is found in religious faith, it is no happy coincidence wherein their tradition's 'beliefs, practices, and resources' luckily speak to their immediate circumstances, fears, and expectations. Instead, those theological and spiritual resources are efficacious, are pregnant with redemptive power, because they reflect the created order and reflect the creator God. Thus, for a theologian like Moltmann, suffering and the recognition of divine order in human relationality preceded – inspired – theological reflection and expression. Desperate experience provided both the need for, and the realisation of, theologically structured hope. Now, those experiences and the resulting social theology may, in turn, inform our understanding of individual suffering, social solidarity, and the possibility of a sort of restless resilience wherein the promise of a better future intimates limitless potential for the present.[3]

Suffering Alone: Moltmann's Social Encounter

In *Theology of Hope*, Moltmann argues that 'the truth of doctrinal statements is found in the fact that they can be shown to agree with the existing reality which we all experience' (1967: 18). Although he follows this by claiming that hope, in contrast, does 'not result from experiences' but is (borrowing from Kantian epistemology) 'the condition for the possibility of new experiences' (ibid), there can be little doubt that his own individual experiences of loss, grief, and blossoming hope during the Second World War shaped these later, theological assertions. In fact, one chapter of his autobiography, *A Broad Place*, begins by noting the lasting impact of his time as a soldier and prisoner of war:

> War stories are not tales of adventure. They are stories about destruction and death. That is why anyone who was involved does not like to talk about it. I had no desire for these experiences, but they put their stamp on my life, and so I shall say something about them. (2007: 19)

Following this preamble, Moltmann describes, poignantly, his time as a reluctant German soldier – encountering the harrowing randomness of death, enduring deep shame as well as nightmarish flashbacks, and ultimately receiving welcomed grace from those he met in and around the British POW camps to which he was assigned. As we will see, this intermingling of present suffering and past hauntings in the light of final mercy did not remain relegated to unexpressed private events but eventually informed his theological discussions of creation,

the Crucifixion, and redemption. Even still, before such notions were organised into sophisticated intellectual works, they were born of distress and despair in the camps that Moltmann would later call his 'first *locus theologicus*' (2000: 4).

His traumatic suffering actually seems to have begun prior to his imprisonment, shortly after military conscription in 1943. Assigned to an anti-aircraft battery on the outer Alster near Hamburg, Moltmann was on duty in July of that year when the nine-day 'Operation Gomorrah' of the British Royal Air Force decimated Hamburg with explosives (Moltmann 2007: 16). The air raid ultimately killed more than 40,000 Germans, most of them civilians, but on the penultimate night it took the life of Moltmann's friend and fellow soldier, Gerhard Schopper. Schopper was standing next to Moltmann on the wooden platform of the battery when a bomb exploded: 'The mass of splinters destroyed the firing platform and tore [him] apart…He hadn't got down quickly enough' (ibid: 17). As Moltmann stood up, he saw that the shrapnel had decapitated Schopper. More bombs fell, but Moltmann survived with few injuries, his companions watched him arise from the rubble 'as if he were a miracle' (ibid).

Witnessing death's indiscriminate cruelty and war's ugly rage, Moltmann immediately 'cried out to God for the first time', feeling 'the guilt of survival and searching for the meaning of continued life' (2007: 17). Then, a year and a half later, in December of 1944, he once again 'had the painful experience of losing a companion' when he and Günther Schwiebert ran toward an empty bunker to avoid grenades lobbed their way (ibid: 23). Moltmann reached the safety of the bunker, but Schwiebert was still nearing the entrance when shrapnel from the grenades entered the back of his head. He died in Moltmann's arms.

In tandem, these two episodes combined with the more mundane struggles against disease, hunger, and lice to torment Moltmann up to, and beyond, his surrender to British soldiers in February 1945. His acute survivor's guilt from Hamburg was recapitulated when Schwiebert died. This guilt transformed into 'darkness' and 'despair' once inside the first POW camp, as torturous memories of death made sleep nearly impossible – 'when the faces of the dead appeared and looked at [him] with their quenched eyes' (ibid: 26). Showing signs of PTSD and with boils spreading across his skin, Moltmann 'wanted to give up'. He was left, as he states it, 'exposed without any defence to what [he] had experienced and suffered…mental and spiritual torment' (2007: 26).

Early in his military service Moltmann was partly sustained by the thought of his girlfriend, Ingeborg – a relationship that promised continuity with his life before the war and offered hope in the form of a future reunion (ibid: 15). In addition, he frequently read from Goethe and derived both pleasure as well as encouragement from that national icon. Once inside the prison gates, however, 'Goethe's poems…had nothing more to say', and 'every patriotic feeling for Germany – "holy Fatherland" – collapsed and died' (ibid: 26, 29). Yet, hope did emerge. Although it no longer came from either Ingeborg (with whom he would not have a future after the war) or Goethe, it was derived from both relationships and texts.

In fact, working at a camp on the coast of Scotland, wrestling with guilt and an uncertain future (Germany was no longer recognised as a sovereign state, and Moltmann was no longer proud to be a German), Moltmann experienced basic kindness and benevolence that marked a turning point, psychologically and spiritually. The local Scottish families were friendly and hospitable, at times offering to buy the prisoners food or supplies and never expressing malice or blame. For Moltmann, this extension of 'a simple and warm common humanity' restored his life and his dignity (2007: 28-29). Indeed, he found that he could laugh again, despite the 'profound shame' that lingered, and this 'friendly encounter' with those Scottish families became one of the two experiences that raised him 'to a new hope in life' (ibid: 29). Whilst friendship and solidarity figure largely in his theology, as is discussed

below, they do so not simply as a result of seeing his own humanity in the faces of those Scots but as a consequence of another encounter – that between Moltmann and scripture.

As mentioned above, Psalm 39 spoke powerfully to his guilt and displacement, but he also read the Gospel of Mark with considerable earnestness:

> I…came to the story of the passion; when I heard Jesus' death cry, 'My God, why have you forsaken me?' I felt growing within me the conviction: this is someone who understands you completely, who is with you in your cry to God and has felt the same forsakenness you are living in now…The divine brother in need, the companion on the way…the fellow-sufferer who carries you, with your suffering. I summoned up the courage to live again, and I was slowly but surely seized by a great hope.' (2007: 30)

Thus, the Crucifixion of Christ became a spotlight illuminating the connection between loneliness and hope. The true torment, the fundamental pain of Moltmann's experiences, came from suffering in isolation. Accordingly, the salve of the Christian message was not the eradication of such suffering but the recognition that Christ redeemed imperfect experience through suffering in solidarity and overcoming death (ibid). Although Moltmann is careful to note that this was not a sudden epiphany but a gradual realisation, his encounter with scripture – like his warm social encounters in Scotland – underscored the significance of looking outward in one's search for resilience. The warmth of human fellowship was matched by, perhaps reflected, and paradoxically so, the cold lonely death of Christ on the Cross. In both, Moltmann found hope through companionship and commonality.

It is worth noting that Moltmann is in good company on his path from the horrors of the Second World War to the discovery of hope in the social reality of the human experience. Others, such as the psychiatrist Viktor Frankl, the literary critic Lydia Ginzburg, and the sociologist Hans Mol, turned their first-hand experiences during the war into robust theories of meaning-making and hope. Frankl, for example, survived Auschwitz and used the language of self-transcendence to describe his conclusion that 'the true meaning of life is to be discovered in the world rather than within man or his own psyche…and is directed to something, or someone, other than oneself' (2004: 115). Similarly, as Mol endured horrendous privations as a prisoner of the Gestapo he began formulating what would later become his theory of religious identity: 'The more I saw people dying, the more I wanted it to be more than a meaningless event…I began to take note of those who saw themselves in a larger context…part of an all-encompassing purpose, sometimes expressed in Christian language' (1987: 69). 'It was the larger context,' Mol decided, 'which cushioned the shock of the unexpected and stopped emotional drainage' (ibid). In other words, it was by finding hope, meaning, and purpose in something larger than oneself that one was able to remain resilient in the face of death and despair. For Moltmann, Christian theology provided this 'larger context', and, as Alexis Smith rightly asserts, 'finding the language to describe the revelation he had experienced' whereby he might 'connect his personal narrative to a larger narrative of faith' became 'his lifelong quest' (Smith 2016: 216).

A Relational God and a Social Ontology of Hope

Although it is beyond the scope of the present work to give a full outline of the large narrative Moltmann has successfully drafted over the course of several decades as a prolific theologian, it is important that we investigate how his outward turn – his early discovery of hope and resilience in social solidarity – manifests in his theological thought. Indeed, taking the sociality of humanity as his *a priori* (Moltmann 1985: 223), his works arguably articulate

a *social ontology* of hope as much as they do a systematic *theology* of hope. As one might expect, this heavy reliance on the social – permeating both his theological anthropology in this way as well as his understanding of Christology and the Trinity – has invited and received ample criticism.[4] Such criticism most often takes aim at a perceived flirtation with tri-theism in his social conception of the triune God (briefly addressed below) or at his emphasis on Christ's suffering in solidarity on the Cross. However, even his notion of hope as something made possible in the light of an eschatological future, and demonstrated in Christ's overcoming of that suffering through resurrection, has come under fire. Stephen Williams, for instance, expresses genuine confusion over Moltmann's assertion that 'hope…brings us into contradiction with the existing present' (Moltmann 2007: 103), arguing that such a 'this-worldly hope' is 'the problem with Moltmann', for it is somehow both eschatologically-orientated and generative of present action (Williams 1996: 158-159).

Here, we do not wish to undertake a defence of Moltmann, but more modestly suggest that some such criticisms persist only by cleaving Moltmann's thoughts from his experiences and by ignoring his commitment to the intrinsic sociality of existence. Whilst his theological works may or may not comprise a unified system, they do understand both the created order and the divine order as essentially relational. It is only by recognising his expression of this conviction that we may begin to understand his eagerness for hope to initiate social action here and now or for the three persons of the Trinity to inspire psychological resilience in the face of pain and toil.

Creation of God: A Social Image

Pain and toil, in fact, are central to Moltmann's understanding of the link between humans as the *imago dei* and their post-fall separation from their Creator. He asserts that, as *imago dei*, 'human beings correspond first of all to the relationships of God to themselves and to the whole of creation' (Moltmann 1985: 77). Furthermore, he claims, 'from the very outset human beings are social beings [and] can only relate to themselves if, and to the extent in which, other people relate to them' (ibid: 223). In other words, 'the isolated individual and the solitary subject are deficient modes of being human because they fall short of the likeness to God' (ibid). This dissatisfaction with viewing the sovereign individual as the apogee of creation, and as 'solitary subject', is, as we will see, partly informed by Moltmann's interest in the philosophy of Helmuth Plessner. Just as significant, however, is Moltmann's commitment to critiquing and correcting the problems he perceives in the theology of Karl Barth.

Barth, Moltmann contends, sees the image of God primarily in terms of intrinsic lordship, with not only the individual 'belonging to himself, controlling himself and disposing over himself' but also the soul ruling 'over its body [as] an expression of the rule of God' (1985: 254). The potential problem with such an understanding is that the social relationships represented by 'image and likeness' are essentially hierarchical and domineering. That which is lost in the fall and restored through Christ is, first and foremost, individual self-control rather than relationality or social bondedness. Moltmann counters this by drawing a bold line between Genesis 1 and 3. If the image of God is one characterised by, and observable in, the social nature of human beings, Adam and eve's original sin is less a manifest lack of self-control (with all that that implies about individualism and discrete power) and more a rupture of social bonds. This, in turn, means that the pain and toil promised as punishment are quite clearly set against, indeed proclaimed as the opposite of, unity and solidarity.

This is a noteworthy theological manoeuvre, particularly when viewed in the light of Moltmann's personal experiences. As a POW, he was moved by an identification with the crucified Christ precisely because Moltmann felt he had found a 'companion' and a 'fellow-sufferer' (Moltmann 2007: 30). His own pain was alleviated by solidarity, both in terms of the Christ-event and in terms of a promised renewal of the social order in the future. Thus, to define 'image and likeness' as sociality or relationality and, *a fortiori*, to suggest that the fall is separation and suffering, is actually to develop a consistent social theology: sin is isolation thus pain; redemption is reunion thus hope.

This formula, implying as it does that humanity's hope lies in the promise of restored social bonds, offers a particular perspective on resilience wherein the motivating force in the present is the acknowledgement that God's Old Testament promises combine with Christ's New Testament acts to create a world in which there is always more to come. For Moltmann, these 'conditions of possibility' may cause productive unrest; we see our circumstances as ever-changing on the path of 'wayfaring hope' and adopt a corresponding orientation to life characterised by ethical activity and personal adaptability (1967: 23). In a sense, this is the trajectory of God's creation – from the fall to the *eschaton*, suffused with a social awareness that reflects the nature of the Creator. Of course, this theological anthropology (and its implications for psychological resilience) is not only consistent with Moltmann's early encounter with the theology of the Cross but also with his conceptualisation of the Trinity. As theologian Joy Ann McDougall puts it, Moltmann's interpretation of Genesis 1:26 is distinctive because it does not 'fix the likeness to God in the individual's possession of a certain capacity [for dominion over self and others]' but, instead, 'defines the image in terms of relationships that correspond to the Trinitarian life' (2005: 115). In his own words, one must see in the Trinity both the 'psychological and the social', 'combining both ways dialectically: from threeness to unity and from unity to threeness' for this has 'significant consequences…for the *imago trinitatis*' (ibid: xii).

God of Creation: A Social Trinity

One consequence is to pose a challenge to western individualism and, as Moltmann sees it, its roots in Augustinian theology. McDougall offers a clear summary of Moltmann's concerns: 'Just as the monarchy of the Father prevails over the Trinitarian community of persons in Augustine's doctrine of God, so, too, Moltmann argues, the monarchical unity of the individual rational soul dominates over its internal relationality in [Augustine's] model of the *imago dei*' (2005: 105). Moltmann's own social model of the Trinity is outlined most fully in *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, where he further argues that Augustine's (thus, the West's) disregard for the social in favour of the intellect's self-reflexivity, as opposed to the more social understandings of the Trinity in Eastern Christianity, ultimately leads to the 'irreconcilable' twentieth-century political philosophies of 'personalism' in nations influenced by the former and 'socialism' in those influenced by the latter (1991: 200).

For our purposes, however, it is more important to note the aspects of Moltmann's social trinitarianism that McDougall refers to as an objection against 'modern theism's…ideal of freedom as self-sufficiency and absolute power over others' (2005: 107). In addition to influencing political flavours, however subtly, the Church's doctrine of the Trinity directly affects interpersonal relations. For example, Moltmann seems to believe that Augustine and Aquinas represent a 'turn inward' – positing a God whose singular essence resonates with the individual soul and whose three persons present a tiered order of authority – leading to 'the soul's retreat from its network of interpersonal relations and social responsibilities in the world' (ibid: 106). Instead, Moltmann leans heavily on the term

perichoresis to describe the way in which the three 'persons exist so intimately with each other, for each other, and in each other that they themselves constitute a unique, incomparable, and complete unity' (1984: 166).

As Stephen Rhodes and Dominic Robinson observe, this understanding of the divine persons allows Moltmann to highlight the role of friendship and empathy in creation, rather than God's 'Lordship over creation' (Rhodes 1994: 65; Robinson 2011: 135). In response, Robinson argues that Moltmann only emphasises the relational aspect of the three persons of the Trinity as part of a 'quest for a relational model of "*imago Dei*" and 'in order to present a narrative expressing the true intimacy of the relationship between God and his image on earth', as opposed to one 'in which human beings are slaves to a dominant Lord of history' (2011: 137). This, in Robinson's view, takes theology 'in a dangerous direction' (ibid). However, it is possible – and consistent with Moltmann's own formative encounters with hope and humanity – that he wishes to emphasise the relationality of the Trinity, not so much as a necessary harmonising step on a brazen quest to find sociality in human nature, but because he recognises that the power of the *kerygma* lies in its proclamation that redemption is found on the path of empathy and reciprocity rather than individual rationality (Moltmann 1967: 166). That God is three – and restored communion with his creation through the lonely suffering of the Son – seems to be engaged by Moltmann as corroborating evidence of how proper social order reflects divine order, not as a theological end to be achieved by retroactively reading *perichoresis* into Genesis. When the restorative glow of social solidarity prevailed over the darkness of his own personal despair, he suddenly had the light by which to see this Biblical account of salvation history as a story of divine relations punctuated and perturbed by moments of sinful isolation.

Restless Resilience: Hope, Health, and Self

It was also in the light of his personal experience and subsequent theological grappling that Moltmann constructed a distinctive theory of the self. Whether we discuss this in terms of a theological anthropology or a social ontology of hope, it is important to consider the indissoluble link Moltmann sees between our createdness, our sociality, and our restless resilience in the present. In his description of Moltmann's anthropology, Clarke Chapman points out that Moltmann was struck by the fact that humanity is 'both creature and image of God' (2000: 74). As such, Chapman notes, 'It is precisely in our web of relationships that we have the vocation to represent God in and for God's creation' (ibid). This is where Moltmann relocates his discussion of the *imago dei*, the Trinity, and the Crucifixion from the level of God's collective creation to the level of individual needs and actions. For example, he not only insists on the affliction of Christ on the Cross, asserting that dogged claims of impassibility paint a messianic portrait that bears almost no resemblance to those in need of salvation, but remains adamant that such affliction identifies Christ as 'the brother in suffering and the companion on the road to the land of freedom' (2007: 30). In this way, Moltmann reveals how Christ's death says as much about our lonely and imperfect present as it does about our path toward something better. In Smith's words, 'Because there is meaning in the suffering of the Cross, human beings can also find meaning and hope in their times of loneliness and abandonment' (2016: 205).

In fact, that tension between having been created as social beings and finding ourselves in need of salvation through solidarity is in keeping with Moltmann's theory of the self as well as his notion of hope as a sort of discontentment with the world as it is. Much as he took his cues for *Theology of Hope* from Ernst Bloch's *The Principle of Hope* – locating collective and individual hope in the Old Testament promises of God to his people –

Moltmann shaped his view of the individual around philosopher Helmuth Plessner's notion of the person as an 'eccentric' being (Moltmann 1967: 213). In the same vein as his contemporary, the sociologist Karl Mannheim, Plessner argues that the self is always both subject and object; we both are bodies and have bodies (1975). We act and are acted upon, experiencing life as agents but also recognising external limitations on those experiences.

For Moltmann, this parallels, and affords insight into, the paradoxes and bifurcations central to the Christian story. As subjects, humans are the *imago trinitatis*, acting in the world as social beings representative of divine order. As objects, humans are the ontological 'other' created by God, suffering in isolation and in need of redemption. Likewise, Moltmann sees in Plesnner's structure of the self a reflection of the dialectic between the Garden and the Fall, between death and resurrection. Present suffering and alienation from divine relationality is never a final outcome, but a chance or condition for reconnection. In other words, humanity's status as 'never wholly an object' (Moltmann 1985: 48) and, thus, never 'fixed or tied down' (Moltmann 1974: 2) mirrors one of the primary motifs of Christian theology: hope resides where our present reality is at odds with the promise of a redemptive future. In Moltmann's words, 'hope for an alternative future brings us into contradiction with the existing present…that between us and the existing reality there is no harmony…is the unquenchable spark of hope for the fullness of life' (2007: 103). Just as Christ's pain restored solidarity with God, so his conquest of death may stimulate a productive disquiet with the *status quo*:

> …the hope of resurrection must bring about a new understanding of the world. This world is not the heaven of self-realisation, as it was said to be in Idealism. This world is not the hell of self-estrangement, as it is said to be in romanticist and existentialist writing. The world is not yet finished…It is therefore the world of possibilities, the world in which we can serve the future, promised truth and righteousness and peace. (Moltmann 1967: 338)

In this 'world of possibilities', Moltmann is quick to add that he is not only calling for a collective political theology which looks for ways to 'serve the future', but also for a reappraisal of the individual's orientation to this world. Recall that, for Moltmann, 'the isolated individual is a deficient mode of being human' (1985: 223). Thus, he continues the above discussion of the 'hope of resurrection' by addressing what Chapman calls Moltmann's anthropology of 'self-transcendence' (Chapman 2000: 70):

> This is an age of diaspora, of sowing in hope, of self-surrender and sacrifice, for it is an age which stands within the horizon of a new future. Thus self-expenditure in this world, day-to-day love in hope, becomes possible and becomes human within that horizon of expectation which transcends this world.

In a sense, then, Moltmann sees Christian hope as engendering both a transcendence of the present and a transcendence of the person. Again, this is an outgrowth of his appropriation of Plessner, which recognises the individual as fundamentally caught in the friction between self and situation. As Ante Jeroncic expresses it, 'Moltmann is able to articulate a vision of the transformative self…marked by the dialectic of fragility and resiliency, determination and freedom, brokenness and renewal, sin and grace' (2014: 248, 252). In addition to preventing human beings from 'tying themselves down' to any particular way of being, this tension between subject and object reminds the individual not to 'turn in on him or herself' (Moltmann 2003: 41). In fact, Richard Bauckham, a leading expert on Moltmann's theology, go so far as to describe the theologian's entire understanding of the Christian experience as one distinguished by a 'turning outward' to the world (1995: 220).

As Jeroncic notes, however, the modern world is a situation of self-fragmentation rather than self-transcendence (2014: 247). Luckily, Moltmann believes, as God's image and in the light of his promises '[humanity] is not brought into harmony and agreement with the given situation, but is drawn into the conflict between hope and experience' (1967: 18). If, as was certainly true of the events shaping Moltmann during and immediately after the Second World War, much modern experience entails isolation and loneliness in suffering, then the hope that contradicts experience must be one comprised of solidarity and fellowship. Indeed, Moltmann claims that there are two forms of hopelessness: 1) Presumption of instant/easy self-realisation, and 2) Despair over the current state (ibid: 23-24). In contrast, hope considers 'the possibilities of reality' and exposes both the impatient individualism of presumption and the illusory stagnancy of despair as fallacious modes of coping with the present. Aware that those possibilities include eventual redemption and restored relationality, human beings may begin to engage in a temporal social ethics – a restless resilience in which present embodied circumstances are controverted by hopeful actions alongside, often on behalf of, others.

Here, Moltmann ventures into the domain with which we are chiefly concerned – viz., discussions of health and psychological coping. His distrust of individualism, and concomitant faith in the everyday utility of self-transcendence, place him firmly within ongoing debates regarding self-realisation and resilience. Smith, for example, sees in Moltmann's life and thought an echo of psychiatrist (and fellow WWII survivor) Boris Cyrulnik's succinct reflection on the potential for selfhood: 'The paradox of the human condition is that we cannot become ourselves without the influence of others' (Cyrulnik 2006; Smith 2016: 192). This certainly brings to mind Moltmann's own contention that 'human beings…only develop their personalities in fellowship with other people' (1985: 223). Yet, such a claim differs strikingly from other theological perspectives on hope and resilience. Clemens Sedmak, for instance, seems to argue that resilience comes from within, from the internalisation of Christian hope rather than its externalisation in the social loves, obligations, and collective becoming of creation (2017). As we have shown, however, Moltmann blames Augustine's emphasis on self-control and interior spiritual reflection for misleading the western Church down a path of hyper-individualism and political atomism. It is not surprising that his own emphasis on hope as a provocation to live socially and to reject present experience in favour of better possibilities decries Sedmak's variety of Christian hope as ever so much spiritualising. As McDougall astutely indicates, Moltmann's view underscores how creation, redemption, and eschatological glory all entail real embodiment or the material outpouring of God (2005: 117). By avoiding the temptation to relegate hope solely to the spiritual person or to a spiritual practice, Moltmann extends its sustaining power to those in need of literal physical or mental intervention.

Much as he labelled humanist presumption an impatient form of hopelessness – as it fetishizes immediate fulfilment of individual potential – in discussing health and resilience Moltmann flags the world's 'cult' of bodily perfection. He once more calls for balance between the person as both subject and object, claiming that modern understandings of well-being consist of a 'detachment' of illness from the body (2012: 91). The field of medicine creates diagnoses that objectify the ailment, allowing the individual to transform from *being* unwell to *having* an isolated sickness. The problem in Moltmann's view is that this sacrifices subjectivity and propagates an impossible promise of wholeness. The 'order of the body' is dissociated from the 'order of the person', and 'illness' becomes any disturbance in bodily function (ibid: 92, 93). This notion of absolute physical and mental well-being is not only an impossible ideal, but it also stigmatises and fragments portions of society whilst inducing generalised anxiety – particularly as it conflicts so fundamentally with the unfinished quality of Christian hope:

> If only the person in a condition of complete and all-round well-being counts as healthy, then all human beings are more or less ill, since they are not living in paradise…The ideal of all-round well-being is a utopia, and not even a particularly humane utopia…This can lead to the sick being pushed out of public life, and to illnesses being viewed as catastrophes, a view which robs the person of self-confidence and self-esteem…the healthy then turn away from the infirm and the disabled, the old and people unable to work, [and] they condemn these people to social death. (Moltmann 2012: 93)

By social death, Moltmann seems, in part, to have in mind a 'crisis about the meaning and purpose of life' provoked by the realisation that one can both 'no longer put one's trust in one's own health' and 'no longer base one's self-esteem on what one has achieved' (ibid). The possibility of such a crisis is a function of the collective faith in 'a utopia of a life without suffering, happiness without pain, and a community without conflicts' (Moltmann 1985: 272). On the contrary, Moltmann prefers to speak of well-being not as 'the absence of malfunctions' but as 'the strength to live with them' (ibid: 273).[5] Suffering, pain, and conflict are inevitable. Yet, hope is an available rousing agent that exposes one's existence as imperfect, replete with malfunctions, and laden with potential for, and in response to, change. The ability to adapt to change, then, is 'the strength to be human' (Moltmann 2012: 93). This capacity for resilience results from faith in a non-utopian narrative rooted in Christian assurances of relationality and renewal.

Conclusion

In the light of those assurances for the future and the socially palliative love of the Cross, the present becomes a period in which 'human life is affirmed and justified' as individuals cope with undesirable circumstances – such as the depression, shame, and harrowing memories faced by Moltmann after the war – by looking for relationship and betterment beyond themselves. The Scottish families living near his POW camp extended kindness to Moltmann, and his hope was awakened. When he was able to situate his own experiences in the promises and persecutions of scripture, that hope was fully enlivened. These two sources – human relationships and the narrative vistas of the Gospel – not only reflected his most salient existential moments but also subsequently informed his social theology.

Indeed, Moltmann insists that 'Christian congregations can offer human warmth [and serve as] a kind of Noah's ark for individuals in their social estrangement' (Moltmann 1967: 319-320). Likewise, the isolated individual, cut off from social affairs, does not find hope solely by constructing a web of human relationships (a daunting and distressing notion), but by participating in a self-sacrificial 'calling' which sets his or her daily existence in the context of a divinely-instituted 'horizon of expectation' and finds in human imperfection a reason for actively anticipating improvement (ibid: 333-334). In other words, restless resilience comes by seeing oneself alongside one's fellow sufferers – fellow social creatures – on a participatory and ever-changing path toward the coming of the 'promised kingdom of God' (ibid). This, of course, brings us back to the correlation found by Kopacz et al. between participation in a religious organisation and decreased suicidal thoughts – for participation is much more than mere membership, allowing the values, messages, and eschatological expectations of religious community to contextualise and to mollify the unwanted vicissitudes of life. In our suffering, we find solidarity with God and humanity; in our solidarity with God and humanity, we find hope.

In this way, Moltmann convincingly synthesises his personal suffering with his theology to advance a vision of resilience as membership in a 'warm common humanity' that gives pride of place both to the *perichoretic* connections we retain as *imago trinitatis* as well as to the open-endedness of our individual futures. Ultimately, it is the story of God's unfolding and redemptive power that fuels our confident disquiet with the present. Created by a social God, we, too, are social. Embedded in an emerging promise, our plights are impermanent.

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[1] Biblical references taken from: *The Holy Bible*, New International Version, ed. International Bible Society (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984).

[2] Here we quote and adopt the definition of 'resilience' offered by the American Psychological Association (Comas-Diaz 2018).

[3] Note that Moltmann's theological exploration of themes such as hope and social life have begun to take his thoughts beyond the discipline of theology proper, into areas of ethics and mental health (e.g., Bonzo 2009; Harvie 2013; and Ledgerwood 2010). Even more importantly, scholars like Alexis Smith draw direct connections between the 'language and vision expressed in' Moltmann's primary theological works and the concept of psychological resilience (2016: 195).

[4] Both Smith and Joy Ann McDougall provide helpful discussions of the controversies surrounding Moltmann's social trinitarianism and insistence on the suffering (thus, passibility) of Christ (Smith 2016: 207-208; McDougall 2005: 103-115; See also, Kärkkäinen 2007, 2011 and Williams 1996).

[5] Here Moltmann is paraphrasing Dietrich Rössler (1977). In addition to this quote from *God in Creation,* Moltmann offers a slightly different translation of Rössler's statement in *Ethics of Hope* (2012: 93).